

PROTECTING OUR IMPOVERISHED SENIORS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. MARKEY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank you for recognizing me.

In my 19 years in Congress, Mr. Speaker, I have never taken a special order before. This is the first time I have ever done so. The reason that I do it is that unfortunately, the Speaker of the House, the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. GINGRICH], in making his final remarks for the Republicans to this great House on the historic Medicare bill, invoked my name several times and attributed to me a motive to deliberately mislead this House with regard to the fact of whether or not the 11 million widows in the United States who live on an income of under \$8,000 a year have protection, to ensure that they will not have to shoulder the burden of the dramatic increase in their part B premiums that has been included in the Republican Medicare reform.

The Speaker stated that, in fact, I should have done my homework in order to know that they are covered, and that in fact it was misleading to say that they were not covered, and that all who are below the poverty level have their premiums covered under the law of the United States.

Well, technically speaking, the Speaker is correct. They are covered under existing law, and the Speaker will continue to be correct for at least 5 more days, or until next Tuesday when the Republican Medicaid bill comes on to the floor which strips out the protection and the extra subsidy which those below the poverty level receive for their Medicare part B premium. At that point at which the Medicaid bill of the Republicans hits the floor, there will be no protections for those widows across this country numbering 11 million who are on Medicare and who will see their premiums increase over the next 7 years by a traumatic amount in order to put aside a huge fund for the tax breaks for the wealthy.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MARKEY. I yield to the gentleman from Maryland.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the gentleman. Is the gentleman telling me when the Speaker got up on the floor and said that in their bill there was a guarantee that anybody under \$7,900 would have there Medicare premium part B paid, that he was not accurate?

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, he was not accurate because the Republican Medicaid bill, which will be out here on the floor next week, will strip out that guarantee. In the Republican Medicaid bill, as you know, they block-grant the Medicaid program, cut the whole program by 20 percent, send it back to the States, and in fact repeal every requirement that we in this Congress

have put on the books to protect those elderly seniors.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield further, does the gentleman then mean that the only way to have ensured that seniors under \$7,900 would not have their premium increased was to vote for the motion to recommit?

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman is correct. The only way to guarantee that they will be protected.

Now, let me add as well that in our committee we had a vote on an amendment made by the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] to protect them. On a party line vote all Republicans voted not to protect the seniors. On the Medicare bill we did the same thing with an amendment by the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. RUSH] to protect the senior, more impoverished elderly, those widows, so that they would not have to pay the premium.

So I assume, to be quite frank with the gentleman, the Speaker is a busy man and he does not have time to peruse each and every piece of legislation. That is the only conclusion that I can reach and be, I think, noncontentious in terms of what he might have intended.

Mr. Speaker, next week the Medicaid bill goes before the Committee on Rules, and we intend on making this amendment, one that we request the Committee on Rules to put in order on the floor next week as part of the Medicaid bill. If the Speaker wants to ensure that every senior impoverished widow in America is protected, we will have an opportunity in the committee on Rules to have that amendment put in order, and every Member out here on the floor, if the Republicans put that amendment in order, will have a chance to make true what it was the Speaker said on the floor today. Otherwise, there will be no protection.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for clarifying that issue.

Mr. MARKEY. I thank the gentleman from Maryland very much.

SPEAKER WILL DO HONORABLE THING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. WAXMAN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the Speaker of the House, Mr. GINGRICH, did not understand the bill that the Republicans reported out of the Committee on Commerce; but since he made the claim that the bill would protect those individuals, low-income individuals, to help them pay for their Medicare out-of-pocket costs, I would expect that he will support the amendment that was offered in our committee by the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE].

The Pallone amendment would have given an assurance, an absolute guarantee, that if you are below the poverty line, your out-of-pocket Medicare

costs, the premium, the co-insurance costs, will be picked up. If we do not have that kind of protection, a lot of people will not be able to buy part B. They will not be covered under Medicare. Low-income elderly just will not be part of the Medicare program that assures their physicians' fees.

Now, let me go through what their bill does. In their Medigra bill, they repeal Medicaid completely. Their bill does not ensure people below the poverty line will have their Medicare premium paid.

What they say to the States is, spend some portion of your block grant funds to pay Medicare premiums for poor people. But the amount they are supposed to spend for that purpose, and let us be clear. There is no way to enforce even that requirement, there is not enough to cover people up to the poverty level, let alone to the 120 percent of poverty we require the States to pay now.

With the cuts in the growth of the funds for the Medigra program, with the growth in the eligibles for Medicare, which is a growing elderly population in this Nation, with the big increases in premiums absolutely guaranteed by the passage of this Medicare bill, which will require more premiums, maybe even doubling of the premiums to be paid by the elderly, we will never be able to see the States cover the people who are below the poverty line.

I would like to give some numbers. The Republican Medicaid block grant repeals the requirement that States pay cost-sharing for low-income Medicare beneficiaries. However, the Republican proposal requires that States set aside 85 percent of what the States would have spent on premiums, not all cost-sharing, from 1992 to 1994. The premium for 1992 was \$31.80; in 1993, \$34.60; 1994, \$41.10. NEWT GINGRICH himself estimates that the premium will be \$88 in the year 2002.

With that kind of an increase in the premium, with a growing increase in the number of the elderly, the States are setting aside only 85 percent of the amount for the 1991-1992 levels. They are not going to be able to pay for the out-of-pocket costs for the elderly.

Furthermore, once they repeal Medicaid, which is what they seek to do next week and replace it with a Medigra, a block grant bill, the States will get money. They can use it as they see fit. There will be a set-aside of money for this purpose, but it will be grossly inadequate, and the States will have to use that money as they see fit.

They could say to people, "We will cover you if you are in line, but when we run out of money you will not get covered." They could say, "We will only cover 10 percent of the costs instead of 100 percent of those premium and out-of-pocket costs." They can refuse to pay people for their out-of-pocket costs entirely.

There is no guarantee, if you are an individual below the poverty line, disabled or under Medicare because of your age, that you will be protected. There is no guarantee to the individual, only some money to the States, to do the best job they can, and whatever they do will be acceptable.

Now, the Speaker did incorrectly state what was in his bill. I believe that he genuinely did not understand his legislation. When he reads it, when he finds out what they did in the Committee on Commerce, well, I would not want to be the chairman of that committee since the Speaker now has decisionmaking power over who is chairman of the committee or not.

But I suspect what he will do, which is the only honorable thing to do, is to support the Pallone amendment when it is offered to the legislation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. RIGGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

A BAD MEDICARE BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. DINGELL] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, there are some facts that are very clear now. Let me go over the situation. Under current law, Medicaid beneficiaries are guaranteed coverage for premiums and co-pays and deductibles. The House Republican bill repeals that law.

The Democratic amendment in the House Committee on Commerce offered by my colleague, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE], to restore this current guarantee was rejected by a vote of 24 to 18. Every member of the committee on the Republican side of the aisle voted against it.

Under the Republican block grant, Federal payments are cut by 20 percent over the next 7 years. No State is required to cover any elderly. There are no requirements to provide anything to the current Medicaid eligibles. Only 7 percent of State dollars have to be spent on low-income seniors.

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This is simply not enough, and there is no guarantee.

Now, the House has already found, regrettably, that no one here really understands the entirety of the bill. The Speaker in a rather powerful statement has been proven to be entirely in error. How many other Members who have talked about the wonders of this legislation we passed today or the legislation that we are going to pass to amend Medicaid are going to be wrong?

The process under which this was conducted was intolerable. The bill was put in the committee, hearings were requested, none were given. The matter was considered without any hearings

whatsoever, without testimony from any agency of the Federal Government, without hearing from any governor, from any citizen, or without hearing from any Federal agency as to how this would impact the people of the country.

There is no understanding of what is in the bill, including whether or not the fraud provisions are in fact adequate, which in fact, by the way, they are not.

The bill was passed out of committee without being read. On at least three separate occasions, different versions of the legislation were presented to the House or to the committee. Last night, the third or fourth version of the bill was presented to the House. It again was not read. The Committee on Rules had no opportunity really to understand what was presented to them.

Today, we saw a discussion of the legislation in which there appeared to be great confusion and in point of fact there was, because no Member had had opportunity to know or understand what is in this bill.

The process could have been abated by the ordinary way in which legislation is considered. Hearings could have been held. Proper markups could have been held. This matter was reported to the House by our committee with minimum consideration of the legislation, and similar activities took place in the Committee on Ways and Means.

My colleagues on the Republican side will tell us how hearings were held on Medicare. Hearings are routinely held on Medicare and on Medicaid hereabouts in this body, but it must be observed that not one hearing was held on this bill. The only hearing which was held on this subject in connection with this particular process was to hold a hearing in the Committee on Ways and Means on a press release, hardly a matter which merits congressional consideration.

The result is that the House has acted upon this legislation in great confusion. The Speaker has been led into the unfortunate position where I am sure unknowingly he misrepresented the facts as regards the content of the legislation on a point which is extremely important to the American people. That is, that 11 million widows will not have their Medicare payments paid on their behalf on Part B because of the way the law is going to work out when the consideration of this matter is at conclusion.

I say this is a sad and intolerable event. I say it is an event which has been created by a deliberate determination on the part of the Republican leadership of this body to present this matter to the House without giving adequate opportunity for this body to be properly informed through the orderly and regular process of this body which go back to the earliest days of the Republic. I think that this is a shameful way to proceed on legislation. It results in intolerable surprises to the Members of this body, results in

lack of proper information on how the legislation has been constructed or what will be its impact.

I think we need only to look forward now to see what fresh new surprises are going to plague this body, are going to plague the senior citizens, are going to plague the administrators on a State and Federal level and are going to plague the people who would be beneficiaries under Medicare who today would enjoy benefits which are going to be taken away from them tomorrow. I think that the surprises are going to be substantial.

It is regrettable that we have done this this way. It is to be hoped that we will at least learn from it, will not repeat this kind of abuse. But a greater hope is that we might take the time to scrutinize the evil that we have done today and set about trying to correct it.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CHAMBLISS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. HORN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. HORN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

A DISASTROUS MEDICARE BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. BROWN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, today in this House many of us opposed a very bad bill, the Medicare "reform" bill that cut Medicare \$270 billion to give tax breaks to the wealthiest Americans. It weakened fraud provisions in a series of back-room deals with the AMA and with other organizations to roll back a lot of fraud provisions that would have allowed us to more aggressively go after those people that cheat the system.

The Inspector General's office has said that 10 percent of Medicare expenditures go to fraud, waste and abuse. We need to aggressively go after that. Instead, this House today turned its back on that. So, at the same time as this House made Medicare cuts, it weakened fraud provisions. It gave \$245 billion in tax breaks to the wealthiest individuals in this country and the largest corporations in this country.

Perhaps equally disturbing as the bill itself, which I think is a disaster, was the process that led up to this vote today right up until we actually cast our votes.

Some weeks ago, the Speaker and the Republican leadership simply said there were going to be no hearings on this issue, no hearings in committee on Medicare, no hearings on this issue on Medicaid. We tried over and over asking for hearings, requesting of my committee chairman, the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. BLILEY], in the Committee on Commerce. The same went on in